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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3374  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6755  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4487  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3106  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7633  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1705  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5041  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1248  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//  
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7373

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Ban Ki-Moon's Visit, Syria/Qatar, Syria/France, Pelosi,  
Iraq, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon (4/24-25)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Apr. 25 reported President Asad's meeting on Apr. 24 with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, which focused on Syria's relations with the UN and the necessity of building confidence and mutual respect between the two sides. Talks also dealt with the peace process and the situation in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon. Ki-Moon also held talks with Vice President Farouk Shara, FM Mouallem, and Deputy FM Miqdad. In a press conference before leaving Damascus, Ki-Moon stated: "Syria is a very important country, and I expect it to play a constructive role to achieve peace and security in the region." He said he is looking forward to continuing contacts and joint efforts on the basis of confidence and friendship to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region and implement Security Council Resolutions 242 and ¶338. Ki-Moon said that he was encouraged by the commitment that Syrian President Asad expressed to cooperate fully with the United Nations on all the issues of the region. He expressed optimism about Arab leaders' decision to activate the Arab peace plan, saying this step will help bring about peace in the region.

On Apr. 24 papers reported FM Mouallem's visit to Doha to convey an oral message from President Asad to Emir Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar on Apr. 23 on bilateral relations and latest regional developments, particularly in Iraq and Palestine. FM Mouallem reiterated the importance of continuing consultation, cooperation and coordination on all issues of common concern.

All papers on Apr. 24 featured an interview by al-Jazeera TV of former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, in which he said that "French President Jacques Chirac had dealt with the assassination of former Lebanese Premier Hariri in a personal manner, taking a hasty position towards Syria." "He rushed to accuse Syria without going deeply into details and without any study," Dumas added. He called for Syrian-French reconciliation on the situation in Lebanon, adding, "my position comes from the conclusions I reached during my work in the French Foreign Ministry."

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses relations between Syria and the UN with UN

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. Asad and Ki-Moon reiterate the

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importance of confidence building and mutual respect between the two sides.

Ki-Moon: The meeting was excellent and Syria is a very important country. Information Minister Bilal: The visit is a wise step to get acquainted with regional issues" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/25)

"A message from President Asad to Emir Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar on bilateral relations and latest developments in the region conveyed by FM Mouallem" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/24)

"US Democratic Presidential candidate John Edwards calls on the US administration to hold dialogue with Iran and Syria" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/25)

"Former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas: President Jacques Chirac's positions towards Syria are personal, hasty and lacking depth" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/24)

"Olmert threatens to reoccupy Gaza. Israeli army gets ready for assault. Palestinian Prime Minister Hanieh rejects the resignation of Minister of Interior pending Abbas' return from his European tour" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/24)

"The 78th Conference for Boycotting Israel: Practices of the Israeli occupation require intensifying the boycott of Israel" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/24)

"The fiercest clashes in Iraq since Bush's announced success of the Baghdad security plan. Scores of US soldiers killed and injured" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/24)

"Iraqi city of al-Azameiyah rejects the wall of sectarianism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/24)

"Lebanese opposition: Those placing their wager on foreign interventions are losers" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/24)

### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Only a Reminder"

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Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (4/25): "The UN Secretary General will see for himself that Syria supports international legitimacy and wants the United Nations to play its full role in resolving the issues of the region and implementing UN resolutions...."

"Ban will find that Syria is eager to render the role of the United Nations successful as the international organization works to achieve security and stability in the region, and that Syria has never been an obstacle to solutions that seek peace and that are based on the logic of the law and legitimate international resolutions...."

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"The Road to Damascus Is the Route to Peace"

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Isa al-Shammas, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (4/24): "US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's remark that the road to peace passes through Damascus demonstrates Syria's high standing and advanced position in the region and its basic role in drawing up the political and economic present and future of this region within a world built on justice and equality among the various societies...."

"Syria is the important positive factor in the regional arena...."

For more than 4 decades, Syria has built its strategy on the basis of achieving security and stability and establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region.... Syria has always adhered to this strategy despite the pressure.... The US Administration made a big mistake, indeed a grave mistake that negatively affected the credibility of its international policy, when it enacted the Syria Accountability Act, accused Damascus of sponsoring terrorism, and tried to isolate Syria from its regional environment....

"When it did that, the US Administration ignored the fact that Syria is not only the living heart of Arabism, but also the heart of the region and the center of its security and stability, especially with regard to the Arab triangle 'Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon' -- the countries whose strong geographic and human bonds with Syria no one can deny.... Washington isolated itself as a result of that policy, which the Democrats are now confronting....

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"The Wall of Illusion"  
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Dr. Sa'id Musallam, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (4/24): "The concrete wall that Americans are building in Baghdad to divide the Iraqis will not help bring the security that the tanks, warships, and smart bombs failed to bring....

"American planners and advisers are obviously unaware of the fact that the awareness of the peoples of the region and their love for their countries and lands are bigger and higher than all the walls in the universe. This new invention by the occupier is nothing but an attempt to push an elephant through the eye of a needle...."

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"Backwards Progress"  
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Ghazi al-Dada, a commentator in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (4/24): "President Bush is talking about progress in Iraq.... The US president is an optimism addict....

"If Bush and his war generals insist on talking about progress even if they see all of Iraq on fire, the facts on the ground in Iraq prove that the progress they are talking about is nothing but progress backward. This, too, is one of Bush's many wonders. If the land of Mesopotamia boasts of the wonder of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Americans can boast of the wonders of their president...."

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"What New Chapter They Are Talking About?"  
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Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishrin, said (4/24): "Nothing has changed on the ground to make anyone think that it is possible to open a new chapter with Israel, one that begins with normalization initiatives.... Israel continues to stick to its extremist positions and terrorist policy against the Palestinian people....

"Israel killed nine Palestinians in the past few days.... This proves beyond any doubt that Israel is not thinking of peace at all.... Israel suggests to the world that it is ready for discussions on the Arab peace plan while in fact it is stalling for time and working to complete its hostile Judaization plan....

"What happened in the past few days is another lesson to those who wager on the possibility of a peaceful solution with this Israeli government, which is led by Olmert and a group of terrorist extremists who join him in implementing plans of killing, expansion, settlement, and Judaization of Jerusalem. What is needed more than ever, therefore, is an effort to expose the continuing Israeli

aggression and a search for ways to respond to the crimes that Olmert's government commits against women and children who are killed in cold blood in their houses...."

Corbin